

# Jackson dorm law advances amid cries of anti-Semitism

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(Photo: David Gard)

JACKSON - The crowd of nearly 200 broke into applause after the planning board unanimously endorsed a controversial ordinance that would prohibit the construction of dormitories — housing typically associated with the religious schools of the area's growing Orthodox Jewish community.

The meeting Monday is usually part of a rather mundane bit of government process: Before voting on an ordinance, the township council lets the planning board review and rule whether a proposed land use change is consistent with the town's master plan — the overarching land use document for any municipality.

This instance has been different. Amid cries of anti-Semitism from the township's Orthodox Jewish community, the move to ban dormitories has galvanized residents on either side of the issue. The township council is expected to vote on the ordinance at its March 14 meeting.

"The determination is not whether the ordinance is good or bad, it's simply whether it's consistent with the master plan of Jackson Township," said board attorney Gregory McGuckin, a sitting assemblyman.

**MORE: [Is Jackson dorm ordinance anti-Semitic? \(/story/news/local/communitychange/2017/03/01/jackson-dormitories-ordinance-lakewood/98525976/\)](#)**

Longtime Jackson residents have long assumed that the town was ripe for a yeshiva, as the Orthodox Jewish community centered in Lakewood grows into its border towns.

But the prospect of building those schools and accompanying dormitories has heightened tensions over community growth, development, and changing culture.

"We don't want these dormitories. We don't want Jackson turning into what Lakewood is," Bates Road resident Rick Van Wickle said after the planning board meeting.

"I try to get a shed on my property and they give me a hard time. But apartments in the back of people's homes? Get out of here," said Georgian Boulevard resident Mickey Firestone.

Over the last two years, Kosher grocery stores and Hebrew signs have become increasingly commonplace in Jackson, where Orthodox Jewish families are turning to avoid the congestion of Lakewood, whose population has skyrocketed [beyond an estimated 99,000 residents \(/story/news/local/jackson-lakewood/2015/08/08/lakewood-growth-boom-changing-ocean-county/31318143/\)](#).

The only dormitories in Jackson are housing units operated by Six Flags Great Adventure for its seasonal employees. There are no yeshivas currently within the township's borders. In 2014, the zoning board [rejected plans for an all-girls' Orthodox Jewish high school \(/story/news/local/jackson-lakewood/lakewood/2014/06/18/jackson-nixes-orthodox-school/10825257/\)](#), which did not have a dormitory component.

While the planning board meeting was as jam-packed as a council meeting last week devoted to the subject, there was one noticeable absence — anyone from the Orthodox Jewish community. Last week, a handful from that community turned out and accused the council of "singling" them out. Council members largely met the criticism with silence.

"I cannot see this as anything else but targeting the Jewish population. Nobody else in Jackson wants a dormitory," Vassar Court resident Aryeh Margolis said last week.

The planning board meeting did not include a public hearing, but the halls of the Jackson municipal building were still buzzing in the hour afterward. "Even the Lakewood residents are saying their quality of life and the well-being of their people has gone downhill," said one resident, who declined to give his name.

But if the council adopts the ordinance next week, the township could be in line for a legal battle.

**JACKSON GROWS UP: [Orthodox, senior communities on the rise \(/story/news/local/jackson-lakewood/jackson/2015/08/31/jackson-population-orthodox-seniors/32400945/\)](#)**

JACKSON ORTHODOX RESIDENTS SPEAKING AGAINST...



Attorneys that represented Gedola Na'os Yaakov, a group looking to build a yeshiva and dormitory in Ocean Township ([/story/news/local/communitychange/2016/08/26/ocean-yeshiva-dorm-logan-road-court/89412834/](#)), have said the proposed Jackson ordinance blatantly targets the Orthodox Jewish community.

Federal law prohibits municipalities from placing overly burdensome land use regulations on religious groups.

**MORE:** Ocean Twp. yeshiva gets OK from feder ([/story/news/local/communitychange/2016/08/26/ocean-yeshiva-dorm-logan-road-court/89412834/](#)) al court ([/story/news/local/communitychange/2016/08/26/ocean-yeshiva-dorm-logan-road-court/89412834/](#))

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**Chris Kisseberth**

[Jackson Memorial High School](#)

I live in Jackson I grew up in cassville section on a dirt road I chose to stay in Jackson and raise children here because I like the rural feel and suburban residential neighborhood that I currently live in I could have gotten more bang for my buck in other towns like brick and Toms River but I do not like the stress of driving and hitting multiple lights and traffic and

I am fine with going one town away to go to major stores etc actions needed to be taken to preserve what most people in jackson want and mostly the reason why they live in the town in the first place I used to shop in brick and have doctors in brick and Lakewood probably two years ago I changed my doctors and do most shopping in Howell and freehold because of the over building and the unsafe traffic that goes on in Lakewood to throw the " card " is just wrong! This is a quality of life issue moving forward the town of Jackson needs to be careful with approvals of any sort and think of ratables that will benefit the tax payors and livelihood of the town

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**Mark Stein**

[NJIT](#)

this whole ban makes no sense its strictly to prevent orthodox jews from moving to jackson. It is inevtibale that jews will be moving out to jackson becasue Lakewood is over poplayed and we orthodox jews are looking to buy houses in nice comununities such as jackson and toms river so instead of fighting a losing battle u sould work together with us to ensure that ur communities dodnt turn into a seocnd congested lakewood becasue guess what there are plenty of jews like myself that are disgusted with the congestion in lakeowod and are looking to move out of lakewood for this very reason.

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**Steven Yahr**

[South Plainfield High School](#)

I listened to the video and all who spoke were sincere in there concerns both for and against , and there are legitimate concerns for sure on both sides.. The problem does not lie with residents of both Jewish and those of other faiths at all , the problem will be the builders who will do just what has happened in Lakewood once the door is opened for uncontrolled building , it is unfortunate that the almighty \$\$\$\$\$ over rides some sense of proper planning and growth , what has taken place in lakewood is zoning changes that allow basement apparmants, schools in single family homes ,day care run out of single family homes ,businesses in single family homes in residential zones and as published in the APP recently an illegal boarding house where there was a recent fire and no sprinkler system as required by law these are real concerns to those who live in the township !!!

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**Mark Stein** ·

NJIT

We live in a democracy and if the local population chooses to live in a congested neighborhood they have every right to make their own rules and own township ordinances that fits their lifestyle.

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**Donald Peter** ·

Toms River, New Jersey

"accusations of anti-Semitism", did anyone expect anything less. The Orthodox? Hasidics will always play the race card when they don't get their way

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**Barbara Manton**

No not antisemitic, smart, responsible, obeying the rules. Just because you want something and can't have it doesn't mean that it is antisemitic.

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**Peter Siano Sr.** ·

Asbury Park High School

You are just prolonging the inevitable. You cannot win.

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**John Thomas Dilberger**

Correct. Now the Orthodox will go to a corrupt federal judge and he will overturn the town ordinance. The fix is in.

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**Dana Higgins** ·

Foreman/Project Manager at Pat Maggio & Son Electric, Inc.

John Thomas Dilberger fed judge is a she her name is freda... yes very one sided

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**Mark Stein** ·

NJIT

John Thomas Dilberger So i guess ur implying that we horrible Jews control the judicial system ur a disgusting anti semite .

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**Lorraine Pollitt** ·

Rowan University

Why would they want to put a dorm someplace where they do not have a school? What is their agenda?

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**Mark Stein** ·

NJIT

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**Michelle Jones**

Great job! Don't let the cult out of Lakewood!

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